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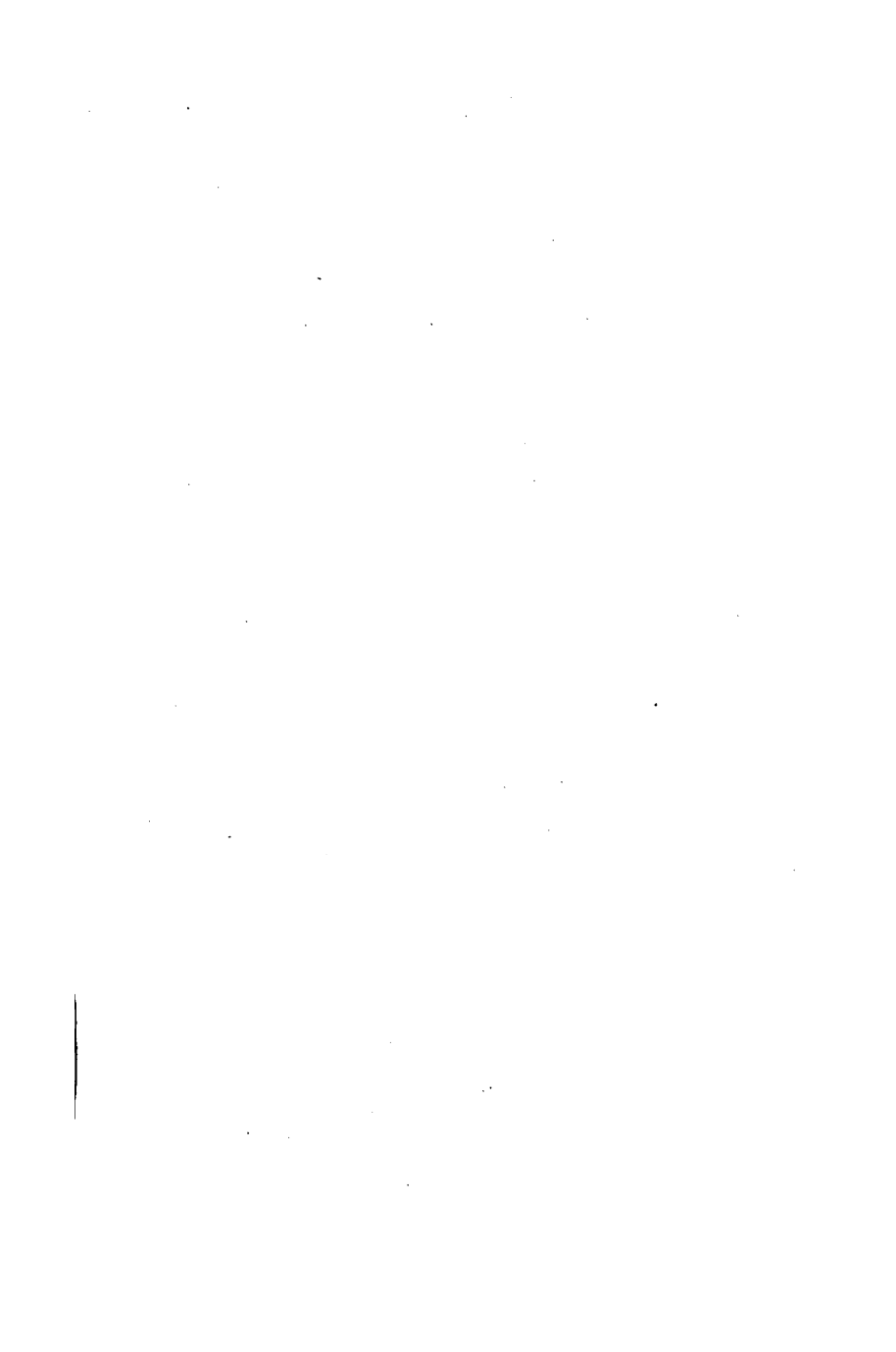
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**THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.**

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THE

# PARABLES OF OUR LORD.

BY THE

*REV. W. K. TWEEDIE, D.D.,*

*Author of "Seed-Time and Harvest," "The Early Choice," &c. &c.*

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"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

PROV. XXV. 2.

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## PREFACE.

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WHEN children read the fables where birds and beasts, and even trees and flowers, are represented as wisely and wittily conversing, no feeling of incongruity is produced in their minds. Engrossed with the dialogue or the tale, they welcome the whole as simple and unchallengeable truth. No doubt is felt, and no question asked.

And something of the same kind takes place in regard to the parables of the Saviour, even in the case of those who are no longer children. So simple, so natural, so true to Eastern life and manners, are these inimitable tales, that few suppose them to be anything but narratives of actual fact. We have looked at not a few expositions of the parables, and in almost every case have noticed that the

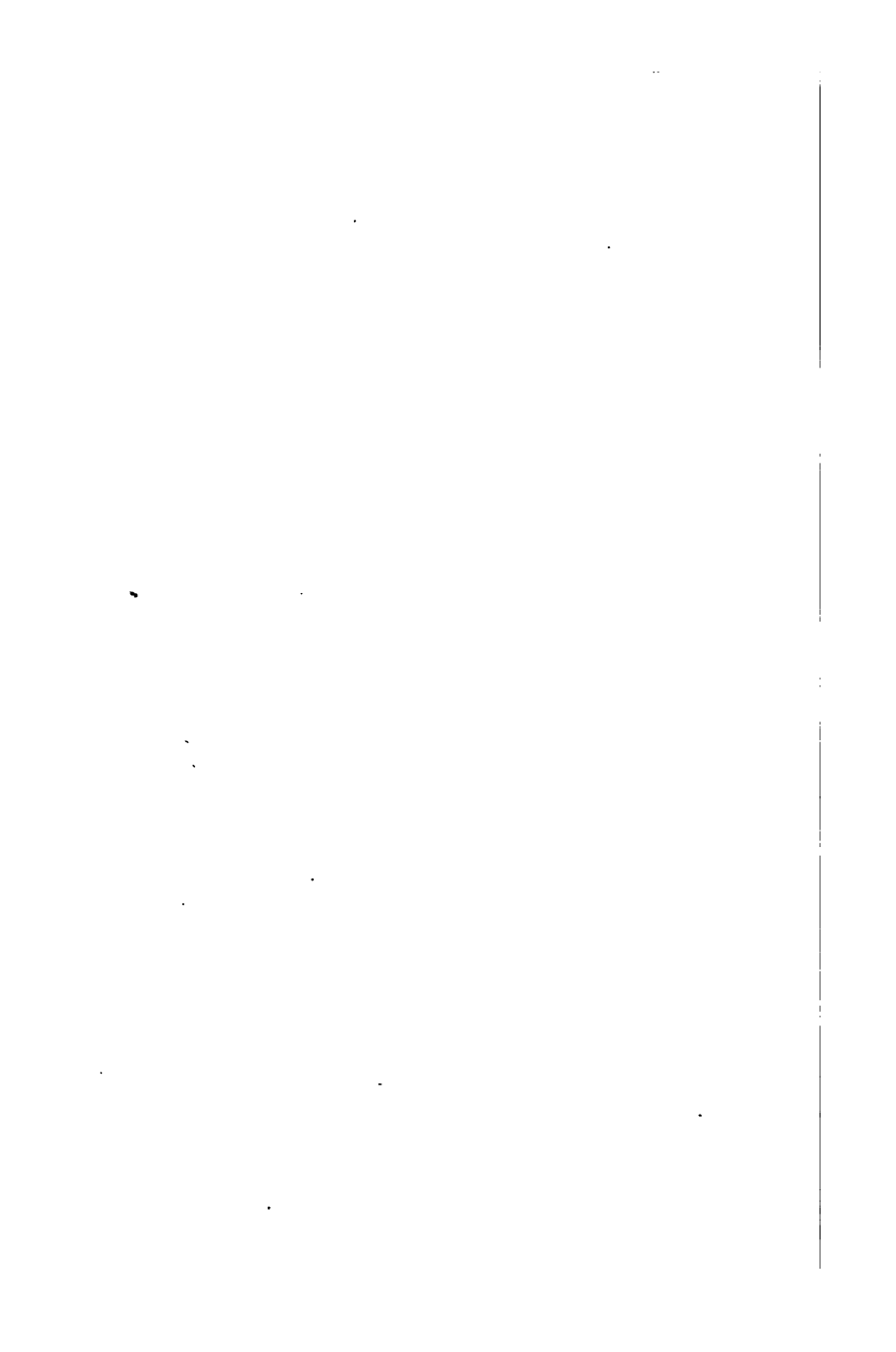
expositor soon forgets the parable, and unconsciously comments as if the events were real life or actual history—a tribute this to their truth, and aptness, and persuasive power, which all who love the literature of the Bible cannot but admire. Other Oriental parables seem clumsy and unnatural; they are like artificial flowers placed side by side with those of the meadow or the garden, compared with those of Scripture.

The following sections draw attention to some of the more important lessons thus taught by Him who spake as never man did. The sage whose head is hoary or whose knowledge is profound, and the child who can but lisp its little cyclopædia, may each be instructed by the Saviour's words of weight and of wisdom.

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## THE PARABLES OF OUR LORD.

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### *The Good Shepherd.*

JOHN x. 11-18.

IT was said of old, concerning the Lord Jesus, that "no man ever spake like this man." His words were with power, and penetrated to the conscience. They were also with love, for they found their way to the heart, and those who had few to care for them fondly gathered round him, for they felt that *He* cared for them ; they were happier men when near one who could both love so well and love the object best.

But of all the words of the Saviour, none are more beautiful than the parables which he spake. Their language is so simple that a child can understand it, but their meaning is so profound that the most learned men have

scarcely to this day discovered it all, so largely are they stored with beauty, simplicity, and heavenly wisdom. The very first parable that we mention is one which manifests at a glance the mingled love and wisdom of the Great Teacher.

Jesus, then, was busy telling the sons of men what God designed should make them wise unto salvation. Among other things he said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." And so important was that truth, that the Lord, our shepherd, repeated it again: "I lay down my life for the sheep;" and once more, "I lay down my life that I may take it up again."\*

How, then, was Jesus a shepherd? Or if he be our shepherd, what may we expect him to be to us?

First, Is a shepherd skilful and resolute in tending his flock? Jesus was so skilful and so determined that his sheep should be safe, that he died a cruel death to save them.

Does a shepherd know his sheep, and watch

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\* See John x. 11-18. We may here remark that some do not place this among the regular parables of Jesus; they view it rather as a figurative mode of teaching. But in its general spirit it is a parable, and as such we use it.

with care lest any of them go astray? The Good Shepherd, the Saviour, says, "I know my sheep, and am known by them." He knows the dangers, the weakness, the trials of them all, and has skill to provide for them every one. His mark is upon them; his Spirit is in them; he calls them all by name; and wherever they roam his eye is on them.

Or, is a shepherd careful to supply his flock with food convenient for them? Then the Lord, our shepherd, makes us to lie down in green pastures; he leads us beside the still waters. Plenty and peace are thus the portion of all who follow the Shepherd of souls.

And does a shepherd fold his flock when that is needful? Amid the snow storms of winter, for example, is he occupied night and day in attending his charge? Even so Jesus has a fold for his flock—his Church, and he makes them dwell in safety there. They find him to be an almighty friend. indeed, a very covert from the storm.

And is a shepherd careful to repel whatever would injure his flock, whether it be some ravenous beast, or some prowling thief? Not less, nay, far more careful is Jesus. He that

keeps Israel slumbers not nor sleeps. The roaring lion and the greedy wolf have no power to injure when Jesus guards, for all power in heaven and in earth is his. What can any creature do against the Almighty arm?

Or, is a shepherd, while he is careful about the whole flock, specially careful about the lambs? Here Jesus is the best of all shepherds, for he "carries the lambs in his bosom." He is himself called the Lamb of God, to show how gentle and how tender he is, and then he tends the lambs as a nurse watches her child. Did not Jesus, the chief shepherd, say to Peter, one of his under shepherds, "Feed my lambs?" Now, that shows the deep love of the Lord our shepherd; he loves the young, and watches over them far more tenderly than we can watch over the old.

Again, does a shepherd take care of the lame and the diseased in his flock? Oh, how tender Jesus is to the sheep of his pasture! Not a sorrow, not a grief, not a trouble comes but he is ready to soothe us. He was once a "Man of Sorrows," and as he knows what trouble is, he sends his Holy Spirit to comfort all who mourn.

When a sheep has wandered from the fold, does a tender shepherd search for it, and conduct it back? So does Jesus with his people when they wander. He shows them their folly, and beseeches them to return. "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die," is his tender language. And when the sinner does return, the words of Jesus are these, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost?"

Farther, Is it the duty of a shepherd to watch over his flock, and to render an account of them all? In like manner we read concerning Jesus, that of all that the Father gives him not one is lost.

And, to name no more, Does a shepherd separate his sheep from the goats? Then Jesus makes a broad distinction between his people and the world. Does a shepherd carefully defend his sheep from all that would infect or defile? Jesus washes us from our sins in his own blood. Does a shepherd seek shelter and a shade for his charge? Our Shepherd is himself the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land. Hireling shepherds may tend themselves and not the flock. They may flee from danger, and leave the sheep to

perish ; but Jesus is faithful to his trust ; none can pluck us out of his hand ; we can never perish ; our dwelling is the munition of Rocks.

We once stood, in a far sunnier land than ours, on the brow of a hill, which overlooked a spacious plain. Around the spot where we stood there were majestic ruins, once the abode of one of the most gifted men of all the past. Rich memories were floating all around, and the scene was so touching as to be exciting. In the plain below, and within easy sight, a shepherd was guiding his flock. He was dressed in a rude and shaggy capote of undressed goat-skin ; he wore a conical hat, and seemed sufficiently picturesque. Around him some ten of the chief sheep were gathered. As he walked they walked ; when he stopped they stopped ; and from these leaders the rest of the flock spread out, in the shape of an irregular fan, to a far distance, and perhaps hundreds in number, following in the train of their leader. Now, that sight was a comment on many a text of the Bible ; it told of the Good Shepherd, who leads his flock, who knows and names them all, who loves and

tends them, and who will conduct them at last to the holy mountain, where there is nothing to hurt or to offend. Is my soul, then, under the guidance of that Shepherd? Do I love him in some degree as he loves the sheep of his pasture? Then my name is on his breast-plate, nay, on his heart, as the names of the twelve tribes were on the breast-plate of the high-priest of old.

## The Sower.

MATT. XIII. 1-23.

A TRAVELLER in the Holy Land was riding slowly along the western margin of the Sea of Galilee. He was approaching the Plain of Gennesareth, and as he rode he meditated on the parables of Jesus. The rocky shore at that point did not suggest anything that could be supposed to give rise to a parable like that of the sower, which was known to have been spoken from a fishing boat in the lake to a crowd assembled on the beach. But scarcely had that traveller turned his thoughts to that parable, when a slight change of view opened up at once what he describes as "every feature of the great parable." There was a corn-field before him descending to the water's edge. There was a beaten foot-path leading through the midst of it, where no fence prevented grain, as it was sown, from falling upon either side. The path was made hard by the constant tramp of horse, and mule, and wayfaring men. Moreover, there was rich soil there in abun-

dance, producing a waving mass of corn. There was rocky ground also visible amid the grain, as well as on distant grassy slopes, and there were large bushes of thorn springing up in the very midst of the waving wheat. Then countless flocks of birds of all kinds were hovering in the region, such as no doubt devoured the seed which fell by the wayside.\*

Here, then, we see the scenery or the drape of the parable beautifully presented to the eye. The Holy Land has changed few of its habits since the Saviour was in our world. The same pathways are trod, the same practices continued; in some respects it is as if eighteen centuries were scarcely more than as many years.

But what does the parable mean? Jesus himself explained it.

The sower is the Saviour—or, it may be any one who is employed to proclaim God's message of mercy to man. The word of God is compared to seed. It is called the good seed. It is a thing that grows. It bears fruit, and that fruit is one great design of all that

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\* "Sinal and Palestine," pp. 425-427

Jesus taught. He said, "Herein is my father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

But when Jesus sowed, when he preached and wished men to be holy, some seeds fell by the wayside. It could not be covered there, for there was no earth to cover it; and the birds which hovered around soon devoured it all. Now, that represents the man who hears the word of God, but does not understand it. The heart is beaten hard by this world and sin. There is no place for the seed to take root there—no, not an inch. As well expect grain and a harvest on the highway, as the fruits of righteousness in a soul all covered over with the hard and stony influence of sin. To expect a crop to grow on a path that is beaten thus would only prove our foolishness, and it is just as vain to expect any good from a heart which the world has trodden, till even the truth of God produces no effect. Satan, the wicked one, snatches it utterly away—and man then becomes a wicked one himself.

Next, some of the sower's seed fell upon stony places, that is, where the soil was very thin, for the rocks were near the surface, and



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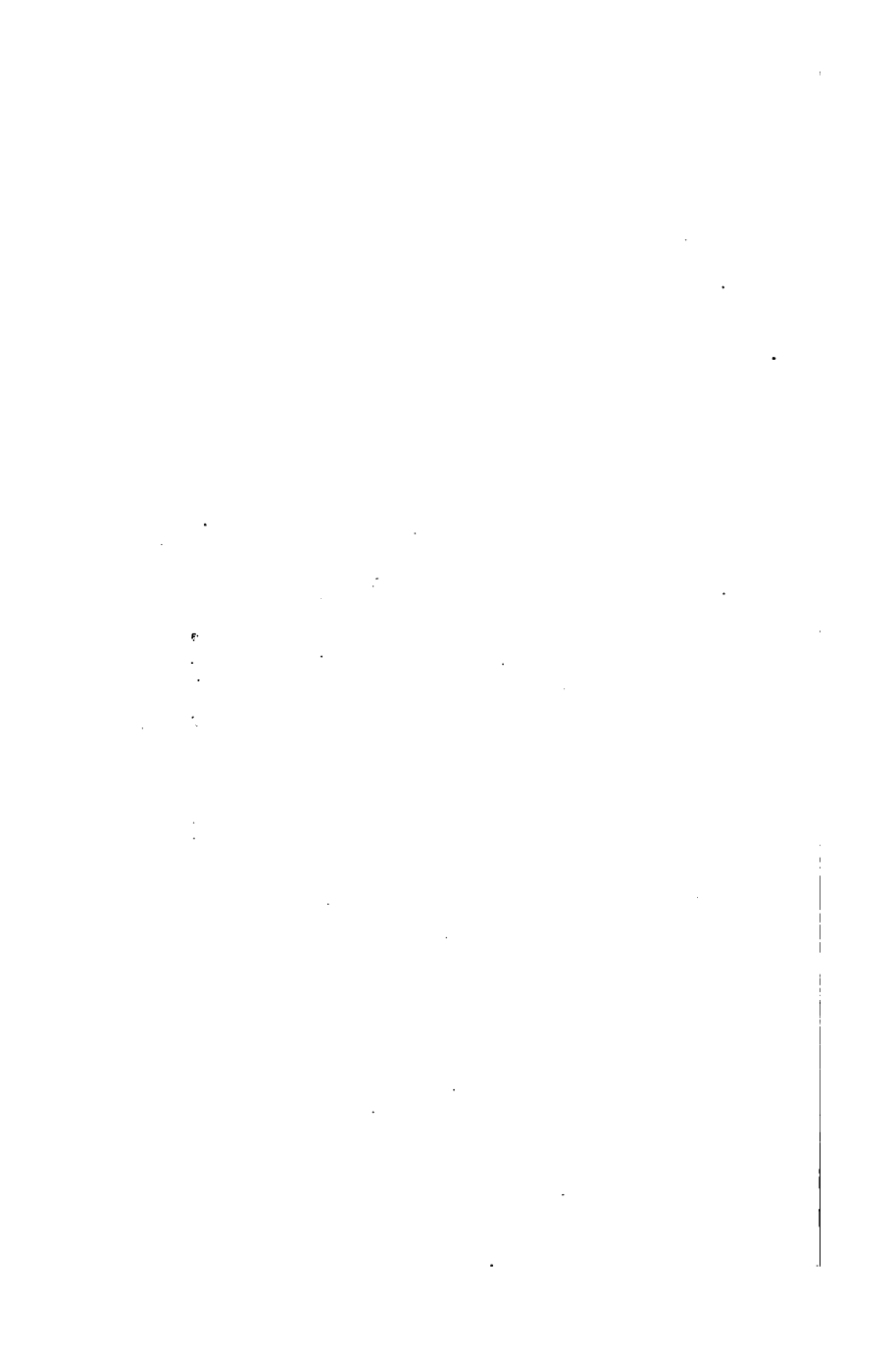
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thin, for the rocks were near the sun.



**THE SOWER.**

Page 14.



sometimes rose above it. Here the seed quickly sprang up. If there were heat and a little moisture, it would spring up almost in a night—so genial is the sunshine at some seasons in the Holy Land. But though the seed sprang up, it did not continue springing. Nay, it soon withered away. The brilliant sun at noon parched it, and it died.

Now, Jesus explains that to mean the hearers of his word who seem to welcome it with great joy for a while. They are delighted with it. They make much talk and loud profession regarding it; but that soon passes away. The seed was never in the heart. It had not reached the conscience or the understanding, and, after all their promising appearance, such souls are dead and withered still. They bear no fruit unto holiness. When trial or persecution comes they turn away from the Saviour; and who would not ask, Lord, is it I? Lord, is it I? "He that is of God, heareth God's word." Do I?

But, further, some of the sower's seed fell among thorns. In the parable it means the kind of thorn of which Christ's crown, when he was crucified, was made. These thorns

choked the seed. It could not grow there ; it was dwarfed and died. And so when the truth of God is sown in any heart, the cares of the world soon banish it again. The truth is overshadowed, overlaid, and destroyed. Who ever saw a man, who was busy grasping at this world's goods, and making money his god, really prospering in his soul? Nay, he is pierced through with many sorrows, and every one of them is unto death.

But some of the seed from the sower's basket and hand fell upon good ground ; it sprang up there ; the moisture nourished it ; the sun ripened it. First, there was the blade, then there was the stalk, then the ear, then the ripe grain, and, last of all, the harvest. Now, Jesus explains that to mean the men who welcome God's word ; who lay it up in their heart ; who love it ; who try to obey it ; and who pray for the Holy Spirit to sanctify them through God's truth, for his word is truth. That is the teaching of Jesus, and the soul is happy which produces even only thirty-fold in this manner ; that soul is happier still which produces sixty-fold ; and that soul is happiest of all which produces an

hundred-fold. If we begin in early youth, that is, in the seed-time of life, to prepare for this, then, before we are old, if we live till then, we may hope that God's good and Holy Spirit will enable us to produce the hundred-fold. To such the hoary head is like a crown of glory. But how poor and piteous is that heart which produces only thorns and briars!

## The Pearl of Great Price.

MATT. XIII. 45, 46.

IN Eastern countries, both in ancient and modern times, the wealth of men has consisted very much in gems and jewels, in precious stones, pearls, diamonds, and similar forms of wealth. Property is often not deposited in banks or coined into gold in the East; it is rather hung about the person or employed in display,—and Jesus seized upon that practice to commend his truth to the attention of men. He did all that could be done to allure and attract them to heaven and to happiness there.

And what is the special truth which Jesus would teach by this parable—the parable of the pearl of great price?

He himself is the Pearl of great price—white, pure, and much to be desired. Salvation through him is worth more than rubies to the soul of man. All the gold of Ophir; all the diamonds of the mine; all the gems possessed by all the monarchs could not pur-

chase it; and the Saviour therefore tells us here that if we would make sure of salvation through him we must be ready to forsake all for him. It was difficult to find the pearl, and it is not easy to find salvation. Just as the merchantman in the parable presses urgently forward to get possession of the gem which he greatly desires, and eagerly holds out all his wealth to make the coveted jewel his own, are we to be ready to give up all that we may win a Saviour, that the soul may be forgiven for his sake, and that his unsearchable riches may be our portion for ever. Paul did that; he counted everything but loss, however rich and promising it might seem, if it would have deprived him of this one heavenly pearl, Jesus. For the Saviour's sake Paul took up the cross, and carried it even with joy, that the priceless pearl—salvation for ever and ever—might be his. Like the merchant travelling far and enduring much for his gems, Paul suffered; he toiled; he taught; he was a prisoner again and again; he wandered from country to country; he fought with wild beasts, and wilder mobs; at last he died a cruel death for the Saviour's sake: and surely that man knew

the pearl of great price, as surely he was willing to lose all rather than lose it.

Now, suppose that some one in early youth were beginning to seek this goodly pearl, the Saviour or salvation, how should he proceed? Where or how is he likely to find what he must either obtain, or live and die poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked?

First, he must make up his mind, that is, he must actually *choose* Jesus for *his* Saviour. The pearl merchant was determined to get the gem which he had discovered. He would let nothing stand between him and it,—nay, he gave his all for it; and with equal decision we must choose a Saviour for the soul. Does sin whisper, “Continue a little longer in me?” That youth will remember the pearl merchant, and at once forsake all for Christ. Does some thoughtless friend try to hinder him from seeking the Saviour or salvation *yet*? But that youth will remember that a companion cannot be a *friend*, if he would deprive us, even for a day, of a thing so rich as the priceless pearl, Jesus. Or does the world tell that youth that it has many pleasures which

he may enjoy, and many happy scenes which he may frequent before making his choice? But are any of these to be compared for a moment with the Saviour or salvation? Ah, no! and though you could turn the whole globe into one sparkling gem, and make it the property of any man, his soul would be worth far more than that. Jesus once asked, What is a man profited though he gain the whole world if he lose his own soul?

Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, had a gem which was valued at £80,729, 3s. 4d., but she dissolved it in a liquid, and proudly drank it at a draught, while at supper with Marc Antony, the Roman. One Roman lady is said to have worn jewels to the value of £322,916, 13s. 4d. when she appeared in full dress. The king of Portugal has a gem in his crown which has been absurdly valued at two hundred and twenty-four millions of our money. Now, suppose that any man possessed all these gems together, what are they worth?—what would they be worth when he comes to die? Can they pardon his sins? No; but Jesus can. Can they save his soul? No; but Jesus can. Can they add a single minute to his

life? No; but Jesus can bestow life everlasting. And is not he, then, the goodly pearl? Is not he the better portion? Who that is wise would not choose him?

But more than this. Merchants have often to travel far, and sometimes they have suffered much, in quest of their pearls. But the pearl of great price, that is, the Saviour and salvation, is always near at hand. Without money and without price he may be ours. No distant journey; no long troubles; no heart-breaking sorrow. Just welcome this pearl, and he is instantly our own. Who, then, would not choose? Having chosen, who would not resolve and say, "By God's help, not even death shall part me from thee?" He "is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared with" him. The great moan of the world, broken only by the hysterical laughter of the irrational, would all be hushed then. The priceless pearl would ensure eternal peace, and God, even our God, would bless us.



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THE DRAW NET.



## The Draw Net.

MATT. XIII. 47-50.

THE parables of Jesus have been compared to pictures. We not merely *hear* his lessons—we *see* them; he presents them so vividly before us that we cannot help exclaiming, “Never man spake like this man,”—and the present parable is an example.

Whether we suppose that the net means the Church or the gospel, the teaching of Jesus here is practically the same.

Is a net designed for the catching of fish? The gospel is all planned and arranged to attract souls. The apostles were made “fishers of men.” They caught, not for death, but for life; they drew men from sin to glory and to God.

Do men require skill and practice to handle the net aright? Until Christ himself be made wisdom unto us, we can never draw men to him. Sinners perish around us unheeded.

Is a net let down into the waters, even though the fisherman may not see that any

fishes are there? In like manner the gospel net is to be cast at all times, and in all places, in the hope of "saving some." One may be converted, or many, or none. That is with God, but, at his command, men are to "let down the net."

Have fishermen often to toil at their task and catch nothing? (Luke v. 5.) Even so, the fishers of men may have to toil and try,—may ply their work in public and in private, by night and by day,—and yet it may seem as if the word returned void like the empty net.

And does the net of the fisherman sometimes enclose fishes that are worthless, or fit only to be cast away? Even so, the fishers of men may discover that they have brought into the Church mere hypocrites and pretenders,—men who use religion for a cloak to cover sin—who make gain of godliness—and bring a stain upon the cause which they seem to espouse. Oh, how often is Jesus wounded in the house of his professing friends! To be unholy is to be vile, and fit only for rejection (Heb. xii. 14).

Did the apostles, when fishing in the Sea

of Galilee, sometimes catch so many that their nets were like to be torn ? In like manner when they became fishers of men we know that the gospel net sometimes enclosed thousands at a time (Acts ii. 37-41.) At one time it might seem as if they were fishing in the Dead Sea, where nothing lives but death ; while at another it seemed as if the waters teemed with life, for the Lord of life was with them.

Further, when the work of fishing is over, the work of separation begins. And so in regard to the Church and the gospel. For a time the good and the bad continue together ; it is difficult to distinguish the one from the other, and the worst fish may have the most glittering scales. But sooner or later the distinction becomes plain. Judas was for three years among the twelve ; but at last he went to his own place, and Joseph was long in a dungeon among transgressors, but at length he was raised to the right hand of the throne ; and so with myriads of men. They dwell together for a time, but he whose eyes are like a flame of fire comes at last. He separates the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the

chaff, the gold from the dross, the good fishes from the bad ; and now the end has come. How blessed they whom God first makes, and then pronounces, good ! How wretched they who have been deceivers and deceived, who thought they were alive when in reality they were dead,—who took their place among the Lord's people, but were in truth his enemies ! How gladdening the discovery that God will preserve us alive for evermore ! How terrific to find that the soul is twice dead,—dead on earth, and dead beyond the grave ! The world represents the sea, and the gospel is the net ; have I then been gathered in, or am I still without ? Upon that my eternity depends for its agony or its joy.

On the coast of Cornwall a net is used which is sometimes half a mile in length, and that is the kind of net to which this parable refers. It is the drag net. It can sweep in the fish of a whole bay at once, and is so constructed that it sinks to the bottom so as to form a wall of meshes from the lowest depths to the surface. So comprehensive is it that to escape is difficult or impossible, and hence it has been likened to death itself, or

rather, Death is spoken of as drawing his portentous net. Now, that is a fit emblem of the gospel. It sweeps in all; the precious and the vile are included; it is an affair of life or of death to every soul of man (2 Cor. ii. 15, 16), and who that is wise would not decide which of these it is to prove to him,—life or death? The separating angels and the furnace of fire are mentioned to stimulate and rouse, and with these in view, oh say, was not he right who said of old that this is a “terrific parable?” Or was there not truth in the saying of another, “It is to be dreaded, not explained?”

## The Unmerciful Servant.

MATT. XVIII. 23-35.

"FORGIVE us our debts as we forgive our debtors." These words in the prayer which the Saviour taught, like all he ever uttered, have many sides. They look downward to man, and upward to God; they tell that as we act to others, God will deal with us: with the pure, he will be pure, and with the froward, froward (Ps. xviii. 26). If I am not forgiving, it is more than presumption, it is a kind of blaspheming, to ask forgiveness; and it is a thing impossible for me to be forgiven, if I cherish hatred, hard-heartedness, and revenge. This parable places that truth in the very light of heaven.

A talent of silver was worth about £187, 10s. of our money, according to the calculations of some, so that ten thousand silver talents, to say nothing of gold, amounted to nearly two millions, and that is the sum which is used to set forth the obligations of this servant. When justice was about to take its

course, according to custom, or even scriptural usage—(See Lev. xxv. 39)—in such a case, this frantic misery of the debtor procured his forgiveness; the debt was cancelled. “The lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.”

How happy this man must now be! He himself is free; those who are dear to him are the same,—his generous and large hearted lord has utterly forgiven all. Surely the man will now walk through life humble, tender, compassionate, and gentle!

But no; amid his anguish he is still self-ignorant; he goes out from the presence of his Lord, he meets a fellow-servant who owes him about three pounds of our money; he seizes him by the throat; he demands instant payment; he refuses all delay, and drags his fellow-servant to prison. He had received favour, but would show none.

Justice, however, is not far away. The lord soon learned what had happened. He recalled the man whom he had just forgiven; upbraided him with his wickedness, and, in the exercise of a power claimed by Oriental rulers

whose servants were their property, delivered him to the tormentors till all that he owed should be paid. The man's sins quickly found him out. His guilt and his punishment came almost together. He heaped up misery by heaping up sin.

Now, here the Great Teacher shows,—

First, The nature of our debt to God, or the amount of our sins against him. Few young minds, perhaps none, can comprehend so vast a sum as two millions of pounds ; yet that is the sum taken to show how much we owe to God, who is represented by the lord, or master mentioned in the parable. Our debt is incalculable ; our sins have gone over our heads ; they have drowned us in the depths of woe ; they are more in number than the hairs of our head.

Yet, secondly, The good God will forgive them all. If we apply in the appointed way, and cry for mercy, as he has taught us, that is through Jesus, he will blot out all our trespasses ; he will cast them into the depths of the sea. God's mercy is over all his other works, and he blots out our iniquities like a cloud. No sinner need despair, if he will only

turn to God. The pardon of this debtor makes that both plain and certain.

But, thirdly, While God is so good, so merciful, and forgiving, see how cruel man is to his brother man. The uttermost farthing must be paid to him, or uttermost punishment will be inflicted. The hearts of some men have no pity; their eye has no tears; they will show no mercy, and can expect none (James ii. 13). Rigid law, high-handed oppression—that is often all man's mercy to man. How unlike God! How opposed to God! How sure to provoke his displeasure!

For, fourthly, This cruel servant just dug a pit for himself. He was oppressive to his brother man, and in that was yet more oppressive to himself. He refused to forgive, and in that state of mind he could not be forgiven. Nay, swift vengeance becomes his portion; a dungeon was his home, and torment his companion there. And does not this just tell what will come upon all the unforgiving—all the malicious and oppressive? None more unlike to God, who delighteth to pardon—who blotteth out iniquity like a cloud. Oh, let the young learn to be like the God of pardons,

and then in Jesus they are accepted. They are like him who prayed on his cross, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

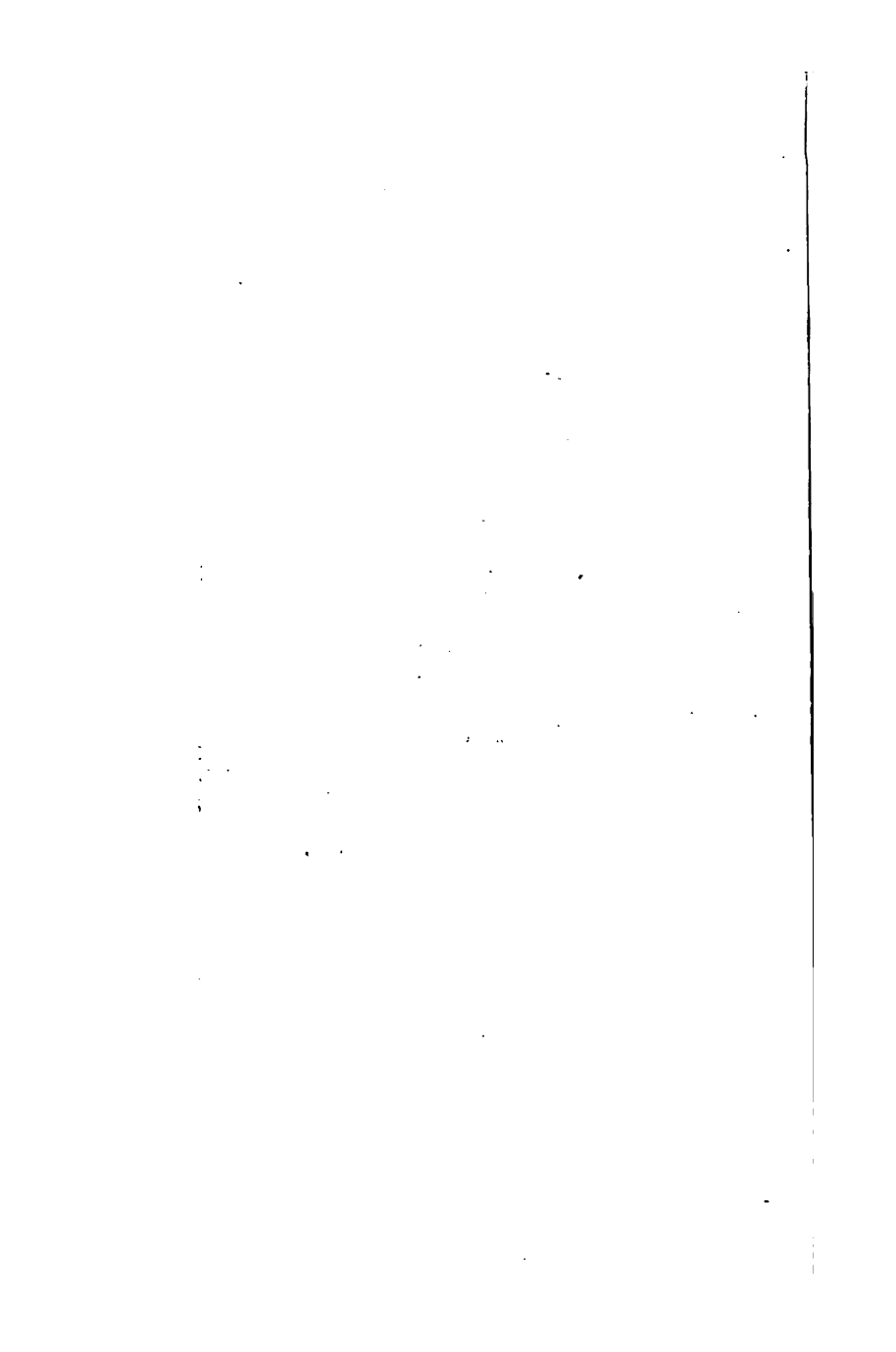
Two Christians at Antioch, in ancient times, had quarrelled. The one was grieved, and asked pardon from the other, who, though a priest, refused to forgive his brother. Persecution soon arose, and that priest was dragged to martyrdom. By the way, his friend, whose life was not in peril, again sued for pardon, but was again refused. When the hour of trial came, the priest denied the faith, sacrificed to the heathen gods, and escaped with his life; but his friend confessed he was a Christian, and died in place of the other. Now, this legend, true or false, is employed to illustrate our parable. The unforgiving man was deserted by the grace of God and fell; he denied the faith, and was an apostate; the penitent, who forgave and asked forgiveness, was upheld, and won the crown of martyrdom. The path of duty is the path of safety, whatever sin may whisper.







THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD.



## The Labourers in the Vineyard.

MATT. XX. 1-16.

WHAT does the Lord Jesus design to teach by this parable? We have here some more of the words of Him who knew all the counsel of God; and what are we to learn while he again opens up the mind of the Father to man?

The first thing is that the first labourers were hired at so much for the day, to begin from the early morning. About nine o'clock others went into the vineyard, and were to get "whatsoever was right." At noon, and at three afternoon, other labourers were sent into the vineyard, and the bargain with them also was that they were to receive "whatsoever was right" for their labour. That at least. About the eleventh hour, moreover, that is just one hour before the close of the day, still others were sent to work, and the bargain with them also was, that "whatsoever was right, that they should receive."

Now, hitherto everything is easy to be

understood. The difficulty begins when the hour of payment comes, and when they who had begun to work at six o'clock in the morning, and they who had not entered the vineyard till five in the afternoon were all paid alike. Such conduct does seem strange. At first sight we scarcely wonder though some of the workmen murmured. It seems rather unjust, at least capricious, that those who have borne the scorching sun, and toiled through the weary hours, should get no more than those whose labour had been a pastime rather than a toil—a single hour of work in the cool of the evening,

How, then, do we explain this? The householder here mentioned is our Father who is in heaven. "There is no unrighteousness with him," and how are we to understand the present case?

It teaches, first, that not one of all God's servants shall get *less* than justice. Every one will get his due. Just as the men who began work the earliest got every farthing which they were promised, so God will give unto all according as their works shall be. Perfect equity will preside over all his decrees,

and not one of all the children of men will be able to say, "I have been defrauded of one jot or one tittle of my due." Some may get more; none will get less.

But this parable also shows that while all will get their due, some get more. Equity reigns, but grace reigns also. The labourers who entered at different hours throughout the day got more than they could claim as a right. The householder was not only just—he was generous. He chose to manifest his bounty, and liberally rewarded. And so the great Householder may bless the children of men beyond all that they can ask or think. He may open his hand and satisfy every want. All will then get their due at least, while some may get far more. God is sovereign, and surely he may do what he will with his own.

But next; some murmured because they did not get more than they had agreed to take. Because their employer chose to be generous, they appear to have thought that he was unjust. They complained against the householder, and challenged his procedure as not fair. In like manner some men murmur

because the great God bestows his favours according to his own good pleasure, and not according to human plans. But "friend, I do thee no wrong. Didst thou not agree with me for a penny? . . . Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?"—These questions settle all disputes. They are indeed unanswerable, and he must be both unreasonable and wicked who would say, "God may not do what he will with his own;" or, "God is bound to do to all men alike." "I claim more than is due."

There is a hoary headed man. He has gone home to glory, after three score years and ten of suffering here below. There is another. He was called away amid the activities of life, and while yet in the prime of his manhood and vigour. And there is a little child born but to die.—

"A child of misery, baptized in tears."

He also is snatched away from this heritage of woe to one of cloudless joy and perfect beatitude. They are all assembled in their Father's house on high. Now, will any of these grudge the felicity of the rest? They are all saved,

and shall the hoary headed saint complain of the steep and upward path by which he climbed to glory, whereas the little one went home at a bound? Ah, no; God's will is now supreme to them, and it would be the same even here, could we comprehend the good ways of God as we shall do hereafter.

In Persia, we may add, the same practice as this parable describes, continues to our times, and a traveller there has told that in the market-place at Hamadan, he saw the usage vividly illustrated, in labourers waiting, and that from hour to hour, with their implements of toil ready to commence when hired. It is well for us to be ready to enter upon the right path as soon as we are called, and always to remember that "the Judge of all the earth will do right."

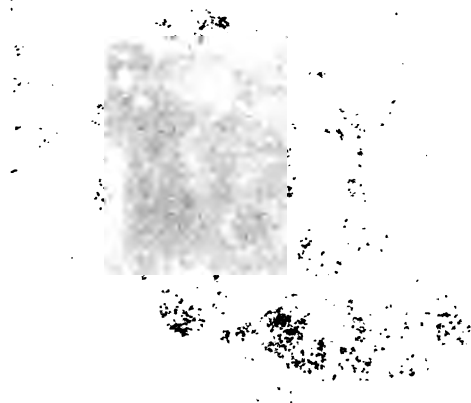
## The Vineyard.

MATT XXI. 33-41.

THE great Teacher took great pains to let men see into their own heart. He shed the light of heaven upon it, and showed it just as it is seen by God. When a drop of water is beheld with the help of the Solar microscope, it actually seems a little world, abounding with living things, one preying upon another, and every one offensive or disgusting, though curious, to the eye. It is the same with the heart of man when the light of God is on it.

And this parable sheds much of that light. The vineyard is the Church of God among the Jews. The hedge, and the winepress, and the tower all represent the pains which God in mercy took for the welfare of that vineyard ; and, after all had been done, surely the King of Zion had a right to expect abundant fruit. Where could ripe, luxuriant clusters ever hang, if not in a vineyard so tended and so thoroughly furnished !

Yet what happened ? How did the men to







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whom that vineyard was let out repay the great care of the proprietor? When he sent his servants for his share of the fruits, the husbandmen beat, stoned, or murdered them, and these crimes were repeated a second time. Those men were robbers and murderers both in one, so that blood touched blood. They determined not to acknowledge the right of the proprietor, and would rather perpetrate repeated murders than grant him any share of the fruit.

At length he sent his son. It was hoped that he would be revered, and that those unprincipled men would at last do what was right. But here, also, they rushed into crime. As soon as they saw the son, they resolved to slay him, and they did it in the hope that they would themselves become heir to the vineyard which they had fraudulently seized. Thus did they hurry from guilt to guilt, filling to the brim the cup of their iniquity.

Now, what is it that Jesus teaches by this parable? It was an attempt to show the Jews what their own conduct had been or was about to be. Their nation was the vineyard. It is spoken of under that name by David,

by Isaiah, and others. To cultivate it—that is, to teach men heavenly wisdom, and warn them to bear fruit unto holiness—prophet after prophet had been sent; wonder after wonder had been wrought, but still the Jews managed that vineyard for themselves, and not for God. Elijah, for example, was driven into hiding because he rebuked the king and the people for their idolatry. Some say that Isaiah was sawn asunder. Jeremiah was cast into a dungeon during the evil times in which he lived. All, in short, was wild confusion. “They took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another,” are words which exactly describe the treatment of the prophets (Heb. xi. 36–38).

Then the Son of God, the great Proprietor, came. He told of the love and the mercy of the Father, and entreated the nation to return to its God. He wept over it; he toiled and watched for it; his days and his nights were given to its cause; and need we tell the result? With wicked hands he was crucified and slain. Again and again he was stoned, and never was the nation satisfied till they had treated the Son even worse than the pro-

phets had been. "Come, let us kill him, . . . ." was their resolute determination ; and they did it in a way that has shocked millions since then.

But when Jesus was speaking this parable to those who were afterwards to fulfil his words, he asked, "What will the lord of the vineyard do to those husbandmen?" and his hearers replied, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men." The words were prophetic ; they exactly describe what befell. Jerusalem was soon overthrown ; its Temple was burned ; the people were slaughtered in thousands. Some even believe that considerably more than a million of the Jews perished when the city was destroyed. Many of them slew each other. Multitudes were carried captive. At various places their Roman captors made them fight with wild beasts for sport to the conquerors. These "husbandmen" thus learned at last, amid woes which agitate men even yet, what it is to depart from God, the great Proprietor, to rob him of his glory, and hate those whom he sent to warn or to save. But are *we* beyond all danger ? How can we escape if we neglect the great salvation ?

When men travel in the East, they often, nay, always, see something to explain and illustrate the Bible. And a traveller has come back from Persia to tell that he has often been reminded of this parable there. The same mode of letting vineyards is common; the same fraud or violence on the part of the "husbandmen," the same vain endeavours on the part of the proprietor to obtain a share of the produce, and sometimes the same bloody scenes as the Saviour employed to fasten conviction on the consciences of men. But in every age and land man is eager to live without God in the world; and blessed are they who rejoice to be subject to God our Saviour, and whose souls he adorns with the graces of the Spirit, the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

## The Wedding Garment.

MATT. xxii. 11-14.

THIS parable cannot be understood unless we keep in view certain of the customs of the East. On high festival occasions, then, the guests were furnished by their entertainer with a robe befitting the event. These garments were kept in store in the abodes of the rich, and, as guest after guest entered the home of hospitality, he received that portion of dress which fitted him for appearing there. Referring to a similar practice, an Eastern traveller says, "One could scarcely believe the expense incurred by the king of Persia for such gifts. His wardrobes are always full. The dresses are kept in magazines, assorted and apart."

At the marriage supper, then, which is described in this portion of God's holy word, that custom had been observed. When the feast was ready the servants of the king were sent to call those who had been previously invited, for, in the East, a second invitation was the usage. They, however, declined, and, after

thus trifling with their hospitable king, they **mocked him** yet more by the pretexts which they pled for their **absence**. They had something which they preferred to him, and this aptly sets forth the manner in which men too often treat the King of kings, or the glorious gospel of the blessed God. The farm or the merchandise has more charms for them than the invitation of the King eternal, immortal, and invisible; and, rather than comply with his requests, or his tender and loving entreaty, they will despitefully use those who are the messengers of his mercy; so unwise are mortals towards God.

But that is not the portion of the parable which is to be considered here. The guest-chamber was filled after all. The king was not to be disappointed, and his servants soon collected a sufficient number to people his halls. From the very highway "both the good and the bad" were gathered in, and "the wedding was furnished with guests."

A strange and motley marriage-party that! The highway furnished its contribution. The streets and lanes, perhaps, sent in theirs. There might be some in rags, and some who

had never seen such a sight before. As the lights in the royal chamber flashed upon those groups, it would have been a curious study to have marked their conduct, their surprise, and amazement at all that they beheld. But however motley or promiscuous they might be, they represented just the better the goodness of the great King of kings in inviting all to come to his Son, the Saviour. That is the meaning of this peculiar sight. It shows that if some men decline God's gracious invitations, and perish on that account, he will find others to welcome them. If some men be so engrossed with worldly things—the farm or the merchandise—as to put away the tender invitations of God, he will raise up monuments of mercy independent of them. To the poor the gospel is preached. To the friendless the Friend of sinners is welcome, and thus God's purposes of mercy are accomplished, just as the king in the parable had his “wedding furnished with guests,” in spite of the shallow pretexts of the others.

It is here, then, that our present portion of the parable begins. The guests are all assembled ; only one thing more is needed—the

presence of the king. He appears, but, amid the group, the royal eye rests on one who had not on a wedding garment ; he was not arrayed as the others were : the king expostulated ; the detected one was speechless, and misery beyond what can easily be told was his lot. It was with him as a Jewish legend tells of Esau. He is to steal into heaven, veiled in his mantle to escape detection ; “ but the holy blessed God will seize him, and bring him out from thence.”

Now, what is the meaning of this, or what does Jesus teach us here ?

First, A wedding-garment was provided for this man as well as for the rest of the guests, but, from carelessness, or stupidity, or satisfaction with his own clothing, he had declined to put it on. And does not this just set forth, so plainly that a child can understand it, the manner in which many a sinner treats the invitation of Jesus, “ Come unto me ? ” He has provided a garment for them—a seamless robe, his own righteousness—without spot or wrinkle on it all. But men are careless, and they do not heed the Saviour’s goodness. They are ignorant, and cannot comprehend it. They are



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rant, and cannot comprehend it. They are



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proud, and disregard it. They are satisfied with their own righteousness, and that which Jesus provided they despise or put away. Even in the guest-chamber, among the people of God, many appear without the provided robe. They may have heard of it. They may have looked at it; but they pass in without putting it on, and He whose eye is like a flame of fire at once detects them to be none of his. That is a deep saying, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ"—put him on as men put on a garment.

But again: the man at the guest-table was instantly detected. The question put to him by the king was, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?" There was one ready for you as you entered; why was it not put on? I did not ask you to furnish it for yourself; I provided it. What, then, has led *you* to despise or neglect what the others have attended to? Why are you here in this plight?

And if such questions might be asked in such a case as the parable mentions, much more in regard to the goodness of our God. He has made all ready, that we may be satis-

fied with the goodness of his house. He has given his invitation in these generous terms, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come; . . . ." or "Whosoever will, let him come." He has provided the garment in which we are to appear before him; and, after all this fulness of mercy, should we not blush and be ashamed to enter the presence of the King without that robe? Is not his majesty mocked? Is not his gift refused and his love slighted, when we thus decline?

And oh, what rags men sometimes wear in the very presence of God!

One man sacrifices his children to some blood-loving idol, and thinks that that will secure the favour which he feels he needs.

Another man trusts to his own sufferings. Perhaps he scourges himself till his blood flows, and then concludes that that will suffice.

Again, some men think that their own goodness will do for a robe. Many trust to pilgrimages, and fasting, and similar things; and not a few suppose that their religiousness is sure to secure God's favour—they can need nothing more. They count, perhaps, a hundred prayers which they "say" in a day;

may, some employ others to repeat prayers in their stead that the number may be sufficient, and with such poor deceptions, men pass into the presence of God, till his holy eye detects them, and his holy justice condemns. Oh, how blessed they who meekly and thankfully put on the wedding garment which God provided—that is the perfect righteousness of Christ! (Isa. lxi. 10.)

But next: the man was speechless. He had not a word to say in answer to the question of his hospitable king.

And will it not be the same with us, if we appear before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus clothed in the rags of our own righteousness, not the spotless robe of Christ's?

What *can* we reply? The garment is all ready. It is free. It is pressed upon our acceptance. Many others have put it on and found it a sure defence, and well may the tongue cleave to the roof of the mouth when our iniquity is detected, our pride unmasked, our ignorance rebuked, as we stand before the Holy One. Oh, how the discovery will penetrate the conscience like fire, or flash through it like lightning, when men see their true

condition *for the first time* as they stand before the throne!

An Eastern traveller tells that he was invited to the table of the king of Persia, and as splendid dresses had been sent to him by the king, he was obliged to appear in the royal presence arrayed in the royal gifts. He hesitated till he was assured that the neglect "would greatly displease the king." Another traveller mentions that a vizier lost his life for appearing without a garment which had been gifted by the Schaw. The officer who was to forward it sent a plain robe in its stead, but the vizier would not appear in it, and put on the more gorgeous gift of a former prince. He was declared a dog and put to death. A third traveller tells, that before appearing in the presence of the Sultan, he had to put on a robe which had been given to him, and that to avoid giving offence, or the danger that might have followed it. So unchanging are Eastern customs, and such is the light which they shed upon the Scriptures.

Further, in the present instance the results of the man's folly speedily appeared. He would not put on the wedding garment, and

weeping and gnashing of teeth was to be his lot. Even so: do we refuse the righteousness of the Redeemer? Do we appear before God in our own way, and with our own righteousness, despising his? Then we perish. There is no hope for us. We are in the act of dishonouring the Son of God; and as no name but his can save, the blackness of darkness becomes the portion of the soul. That branch is withered and cast out.

A vessel at sea is in jeopardy from the storm and the waves. But the seamen reach a place of safety on a friendly rock. Now, if we saw them, of their own accord, abandoning that rock for the weltering waters again, what would be our opinion? Would it not appear that they were bent on self-destruction? And it is the same with us if we decline to put on the wedding garment. No salvation without that; but no death with it; and that soul is hopefully on the way to heaven which takes up the words used in another case and applies them to this, "I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids, till I have put on that robe."

## The Ten Virgins.

MATT. xxv. 1-13.

To understand this parable we must know something of the Jewish marriage customs. The bridegroom, accompanied by his friends, proceeded to the house of the bride to conduct her to her new abode, with a pomp and circumstance becoming the occasion. Her youthful companions followed in her train from her father's house, and a party, represented by the ten in the parable, met the procession by the way, to proceed with the rest to the hall of feasting. Should the bridal party be detained by the tardiness of the bridegroom, or of the bride, or any other cause, the delay exposed the waiting party to suspense and weariness; and it was such a case that suggested the slumbering and sleeping of the virgins. They were wearied with watching, and sank to sleep.

Such a marriage party and such waiting virgins are described almost to the letter in the following sentences from a recent traveller: "We went to view the nocturnal

procession which always accompanies the bridegroom in escorting his betrothed spouse from the paternal roof to that of her future husband. This consisted of nearly one hundred of the first persons in Joannina, with a great crowd of torch-bearers, and a band of music. After having received the lady, they returned, but were joined by an equal number of ladies who paid this compliment to the bride." \* Again, of a Hindu marriage we read: "After waiting two or three hours, at length, near midnight, it was announced as in the very words of Scripture, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.' All the persons employed now lighted their lamps, and ran with them in their hands to fill up their stations in the procession; some of them had lost their lights and were unprepared, but it was then too late to seek them, and the cavalcade moved forward." These things; then, enable us to understand the passage now before us. It was always at night, and therefore by lamplight, that marriages took place.

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\* For this, and some other quotations, see Dean Trench's "Notes on the Parables."

Ten virgins waited for the marriage party, • according to the custom just described,—“And five of them were wise and five were foolish.” They might all seem to be honouring the bridegroom and his bride; but they were not all equally devoted, and accordingly the half of the party fell asleep. But how often is it the same in regard to a still more solemn scene—the hour of death! How many are then found fast asleep, their souls uncared for, no preparation for Him who is both the Bridegroom of the Church, and the righteous Judge of all! How foolish thus to miss the very design of our existence here, namely, preparation for hereafter, as these foolish women missed the very object of their going forth!

But what was it that distinguished the wise from the foolish? The one class took oil in their lamps, the other took none. Whatever we may regard the oil to mean or represent, certain it is that many similar cases occur in every department of life. There is one young man entering upon his life-work. He takes the Bible as his guide, and the Bible's God for his. Now he has oil in his lamp. But there is another youth starting, perhaps the



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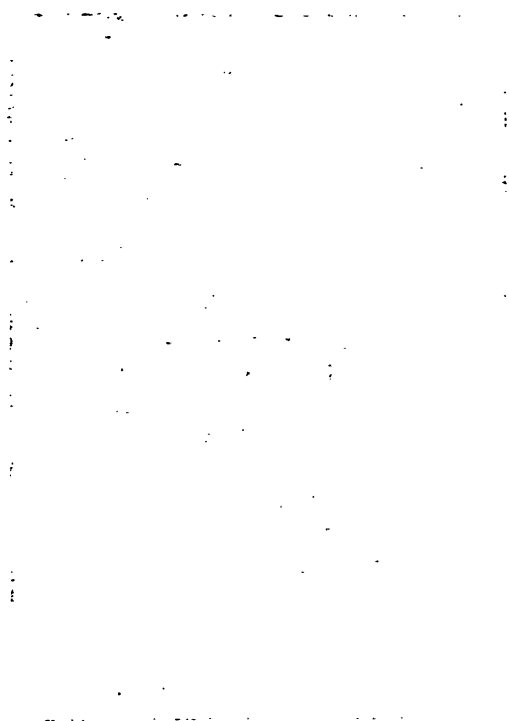
"I have just written to the mother  
 about the children, and the wife has  
 said of the new world, 'It is  
 They will be all so  
 bridegroom and bride,  
 all equally devoted to  
 the party for a sleep, and  
 then in the morning, when  
 the heat of the day is over,  
 find themselves, with their souls  
 prepared for them who are  
 groom of the chamber and the  
 of all the world, and thus the  
 design of the conference here, not  
 then for better, but for these  
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"I have just written to that distinguished  
 man, and he has said, 'The one thing to  
 do, the one thing to do, is to  
 and then to meet with  
 at many similar cases  
 of the world. There is no  
 work, but the work is  
 and the Bible is  
 the best of the world's language  
 for you to be a good, good



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brother of the former, but he forgets his Bible, or he shuts it up: it is unread; he is asleep, and worse, has no oil in his lamp, and when an emergency arrives he is at once undone!

Or a minister of Christ—one professedly so—leaves Christ out of his preaching; it contains no atonement, no God our Saviour, no Holy Spirit. That man has certainly no oil in his lamp. But there is another: he has learned to say like a noted minister of old, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ,” and his lamp is full of oil—it is overflowing; and more than that, it will never run dry; its fountain is under the throne; it is connected with the fulness that is in Christ: and so in countless cases.

But circumstances speedily arose to test the party. The bridegroom tarried, and “they all slumbered and slept.” *All* of them. That seems to tell that they were all in some respects, or up to a certain point, alike. Trials test, and sometimes overcome the wise as well as the foolish. But in this case the wise had provided for any emergency. The others, however, who should have been conscious of the risk which they ran, ought to have

watched with sleepless eyes. But their folly began in not bringing oil; it went a step further when, in spite of that, they fell asleep. Few stop short at a single trespass, few are guilty of only one act of foolishness.

But they had a sudden awakening. It was at midnight that the usual cry was heard: "The bridegroom! the bridegroom! go ye out to meet him." Yet how could they? They were all asleep, and now even the wise waiters must have blushed for shame, and felt as if they had done foolishly, to be thus detected; while, on the other hand, the foolish ones are soon to discover their folly. They all began to trim their lamps, but five were just going out—all was hastening to darkness; and why attempt to bring light either out of midnight, or an exhausted lamp? But oh! how often are the unwise sons of men thus caught in their folly! They know that death, for example, is coming. They are not more certain that to-morrow's sun will rise, than that they will die—and yet how unprepared! No life hid with Christ in God. No preparation to cross the swellings of Jordan, and the summons comes crashing far more loudly than thunder heard at midnight.

But the foolish women had one alternative left; they would apply to their wise and prudent companions, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." It is a common case. The honest man must uphold the thief. The law-keeper must provide for the law-breaker. The temperate man must supply the wants of the intemperate. In their emergency men grasp at whatever is likely to save them from ruin, though their way is often their folly. It is like the cry of the dying for help when the day of mercy may be gone, and when vain is the help of man. How like a knell must it be to many to be told, however tenderly, "Your case is past hope," when life has been squandered upon trifles, and folly added to folly! Such feelings can be surpassed only when the archangel's trump shall ring out the final summons.

The wise could not spare oil for their foolish companions. What sufficed for five might not be enough for ten; and in desperation, or dread, the women with the lightless lamps had to rush to the oil merchant to replenish their cruse. "Buy for yourselves,"—that was the counsel; and, in regard to spiritual things, is

it not wise? Buy for yourselves! Do not depend upon your fellow-creatures, that were a vain confidence. Get your own supply from the great Fountain. Do not try to pass in a crowd, or live secure because we are ten. Nay, let each one apart make sure for herself, and so shall she prosper: the true light will enlighten. Now some live upon the religion of their forefathers, some upon the good name of their Church, some upon the mere semblance of religion; but till they have it for themselves, they are deceived; when the midnight cry is heard, their awakening will be their death-knell. "Follow THOU me."

The five, then, turned away to replenish their lamps, but meanwhile the procession passed on; they that were ready went in with the bridegroom, and the door was shut.

"They that were ready." My reader, are you? To be ready in the highest sense of all—that is, for the advent of the Church's Bridegroom—is to have sin pardoned, the Saviour for yours, the heart renewed, the soul justified and sanctified; now, are you that? You may slumber or be slothful now, but you know not when the cry may be heard. Is it

wise, then, can that soul be self-loving, when all is periled on the surprise of a moment? The procession swept on regardless of the five who were rushing to the oil-merchant, and the scene was prophetic of what is coming to myriads.

"The door was shut." No marriage-feast, or marriage-music for the foolish five! They might be clamorous for admission. "Lord, Lord, open," might be their cry; but the time was past. They lost their opportunity for a sleep, and now they must take their place among "those who are without." "I know you not," at least as friends of mine. And is not the whole scene a picture of what is coming? Men squander their time, they indulge themselves without restraint, and at last by some spasmodic, or half-frantic efforts, try to do in a few breaths what should have been the work of years or of life. And the door *may* be opened, for the Lord is sometimes found of those who sought him not, but we have no reason to expect it, and He who is the door far more frequently refuses to open. In that case, none else can (Rev. iii. 7).

The answer accordingly was, "Verily, . . . .

I know you not." Not know those who had waited for him ! Not know his own friends, the friends of at least five who were at that moment at the marriage supper ! "Verily," no. Their self-chosen place is among those who are without. An hour before they might have been prepared to be happy amid the festivities of the night, but the opportunity passed, they could not embrace it, and now as the tide has ebbed they are stranded. Is not this parable, then, full of truth as profound as it is simple ? Since the great Teacher sums up the whole with a warning " Watch ! " are we wise or are we foolish to neglect the words of the Son of man ? " Be sober, be vigilant " — ten thousand sad examples enforce these counsels, and he is on the way to the second death who neglects them.

Finally, What did the oil in the lamps betoken—was it faith, or love, or what else ? No one can certainly decide. The parable shows that the five were not ready for the midnight cry, and whatever is requisite to fit us for the coming of the Lord may be represented by the oil. The free grace of God comprehends all that is needed.

## The Talents.

MATT. XXV. 14-30.

IN turning the kaleidoscope, beauty succeeds beauty in rapid succession, till the eye sometimes becomes fatigued with gazing, and the mind with admiring. By a few simple laws, the great Lawgiver there accomplishes a countless multitude of transformations all exquisitely beautiful, and sources of endless pleasure. The parables are like these beauteous pictures, and in no respect more so than in their many-hued diversity.

The present parable, compared with some of the others, is alike, yet different—alike in simplicity yet fulness of meaning, and different in the new shades and aspects of man's character, which it presents—alike in depth and comprehensiveness, yet level, in its great outlines, to the understanding of a child.

First, the great Teacher is still instructing man about the things of the kingdom—still raising our thoughts from earth to heaven, from man to God. And in teaching us how

God manages his vast empire, Jesus tells that the king in the parable gave different talents to be used for him to his different servants, according to a custom which was common between a proprietor and his slaves. Five, two, one—these represent what the king entrusted to them, “according to their several ability.”

Now we need not take long to tell what *this* means. We need only look around us and see the eternal King still doing the same. One man perhaps occupies a throne, another is unknown and obscure. One man has gifts which enable him to sway thousands, myriads, millions of his fellow-men, another has scarcely power or skill enough to toil for his daily bread. One man is in a position, and has a heart or a head which renders him the benefactor of an age or of ages: he is a Guttenberg, and invents printing; or a Watt, and discovers steam power; or a Howard, and almost empties the dungeon of its misery, and the lazaret-house of its plague; or he has no scope and no sphere in which to move except one just a little larger than the grave, which will receive his dust at last. This is the diversity of gifts, but the same spirit. Yet,



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however diverse these gifts or talents—these trusts and not property—may be, they have all this in common—they are every one God-given. Not one of them comes by chance, and not one of them is really *man's own*. He is a steward, a responsible servant, and becomes a robber by using them as if they were his.

Entrusted as they were, then, the servants began their duties. He of the five traded and gained other five; he also who had two doubled his capital; but he who had only one buried it in the earth.

Here, then, are some aspects of human nature well worth our study. Two of the three were earnest men for their Lord. They were diligent and made rich. They were zealous and “stood before princes,” and when the day for rendering their account arrived, applause, reward, and honour were the result. They both began by referring to their Lord's gift, for that was the root of their prosperity.—Of his own they gave him. And is it not so in the service of the King of kings? Do we use *for him* what he has bestowed? Do we wisely consider how to advance his cause and

glory, in the sphere in which we move? Are all our gifts laid upon the altar of his love? Then in no mercenary spirit, great is our reward: "Well done, good and faithful servant," is the greeting we receive. We have not served our Lord to buy his favour. It is priceless, and never yet was bought by mortal man; but our poor works he is graciously pleased to own when done in faith and for the cause of our King. No activity like that of the friends of Jesus. They are "diligent in business, . . . serving the Lord." He is no hard taskmaster, and those who love him are no driven slaves. Love on the one side is responded to by love on the other. Talents consecrated to God lead to glory with him through Jesus Christ our Lord. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" is the welcome which awaits us.

But, on the other hand, the man who had but one talent had not turned it to account. Perhaps he was envious because he had received so little. He wished to be great, conspicuous, lordly. It is made plain that he cherished hard thoughts of his king: "Thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not

sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed, and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth." Now, every sentence here indicates vexation of spirit. His language is offensive. The blame of failure is not his ; it is his Lord's, and so the man becomes the very model of those who murmur at their lot—who grudge that God has not made **them** greater than they are—and who throw the **blame** of failure upon him, not upon themselves. **Had** that man traded with his single talent, the last might have been first, as often happens in God's world : as he buried it in the earth, he betrayed both his own stupidity and his master's interests.

For, next, mark the folly of the man's reasons for not trading. Out of his own mouth he was condemned, and the excuses which he pled were just so many reasons for industry, activity, and utmost zeal in the cause of his king. The money-changers, at least, would have wrought if he chose to be a sluggard. And in like manner, how often does it happen that transgressors against the King of kings, are self-convicted ! The reasons which they plead to extenuate sin in reality make it

worse. They are "wicked and slothful," and throw the blame upon God. They deem him hard instead of deeming themselves unwise, and the result is that they sink into deeper woe. They are poor, and become poorer; they are guilty, and become worse. They are blind, and are given up to delusions, till outer darkness become their lot at last.

Further, nothing is more remarkable than the stupidity which sin often occasions; the reason is weakened when conscience is violated, and the understanding is darkened while the heart grows hard. A man, for example, becomes a thief: in his confusion he leaves something behind him which detects him at once, as if the Holy God had said once more, "Thou art the man." Or he is a murderer, and by some unguarded word—a mere word—betrays the secret which none but God knew, and so in the parable. The man was guilty of neglect, and for that he pled excuses which rather condemned him. Because he wished to occupy a pinnacle, and was disappointed, he deemed his lord a churl.

On the other hand, the diligent servant grew richer and greater. He had proved him-

self zealous for his lord, and he received more and more. There was growth, increase, and gladness crowning all, and it is the same in the things of the kingdom of God. Does a man pray? Then he learns to pray more and to love prayer better. But is a man a pretender to religion without prayer? Then he sinks lower and lower, he loses what he once seemed to have, he is a robber of himself, and so in a thousand cases. God will "plentifully reward the proud doer," but *his* reward is woe, while the blessedness of the righteous is thus announced, "In keeping God's commandments there is a great reward."

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## The Good Samaritan.

LUKE x. 30-37.

AN English traveller in the Holy Land was journeying from Jerusalem to Jericho. By the way he was beset by some of the lawless men who prowl in that neighbourhood, and robbed of all that he possessed. When he offered resistance they threatened to take his life, and ended by stripping him, not merely of his means and his money, but also of his dress. They left him naked amid scenes whose wildness is, at some places, surpassed only by the savageness of the men who live by plunder there.

These incidents took place precisely where the scene of our next parable is laid. "A certain man went from Jerusalem to Jericho," and "he fell among robbers by the way"—that is, he fared precisely as the English traveller did. The place is appropriately selected; part of the route is called "the red" or "the bloody," so that all is in perfect keeping, for the year one and the year 1861 have both witnessed the same

class of men haunting that vicinity,—Arab brigands, remorseless and degraded beyond what tongue can tell.

But the object of the parable is as admirable as the scene is well selected. A lawyer had accosted Jesus on the subject of everlasting life, and after some conversation, a question arose as to who was the lawyer's neighbour. Granted I must love him, but who is he? and it was this that drew forth the parable. Jesus would show who is our neighbour, and how to love him, that the lawyer might see how far he came short.

First, the man who had been left "half dead" by the robbers was seen by a priest—a man whose very business it was to succour the wretched, and to tend the dying. That priest, however, had been hardened, not softened at heart by his familiarity with sacred things, and "he passed by on the other side." He had no heart for sympathy and no eye for woes. Lest his conscience should become clamorous, he passed the mangled man, as if he did not see him, "on the other side." *He* was not a neighbour.

Next, there came a Levite—another man

accustomed, after a sort, to sacred duties. Somewhat more curious than the priest, he approached the sufferer, he "looked on him," but he also "passed by on the other side." He did not say, "Be thou warmed and clad." He did not stanch the bleeding wounds, but fearing for himself, and heedless of his brother, he left him there to live or to die. Neither was *he* a neighbour.

But next, there came a Samaritan, one of a hated race, with whom the Jews would not even deal, passionately fond as they were of dealing. But hateful as he was to national bigotry, he had a human heart, and felt human sympathies, and his treatment of the bleeding man was such as has made his name a synonyme for deeds of kindness from that day to this. As described by Him who spake as never man did, every line in the moral picture is as charming as it is true to Eastern customs. There is first compassion—that is the fountain; then there is the binding up of the wounds, with oil and wine poured in,—not uncommon applications then or now,\*—then there is the

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\* Dean Trench mentions that both Greek and Latin physicians commended vinegar and oil, or wine and oil to be used in cases of bruises and wounds.



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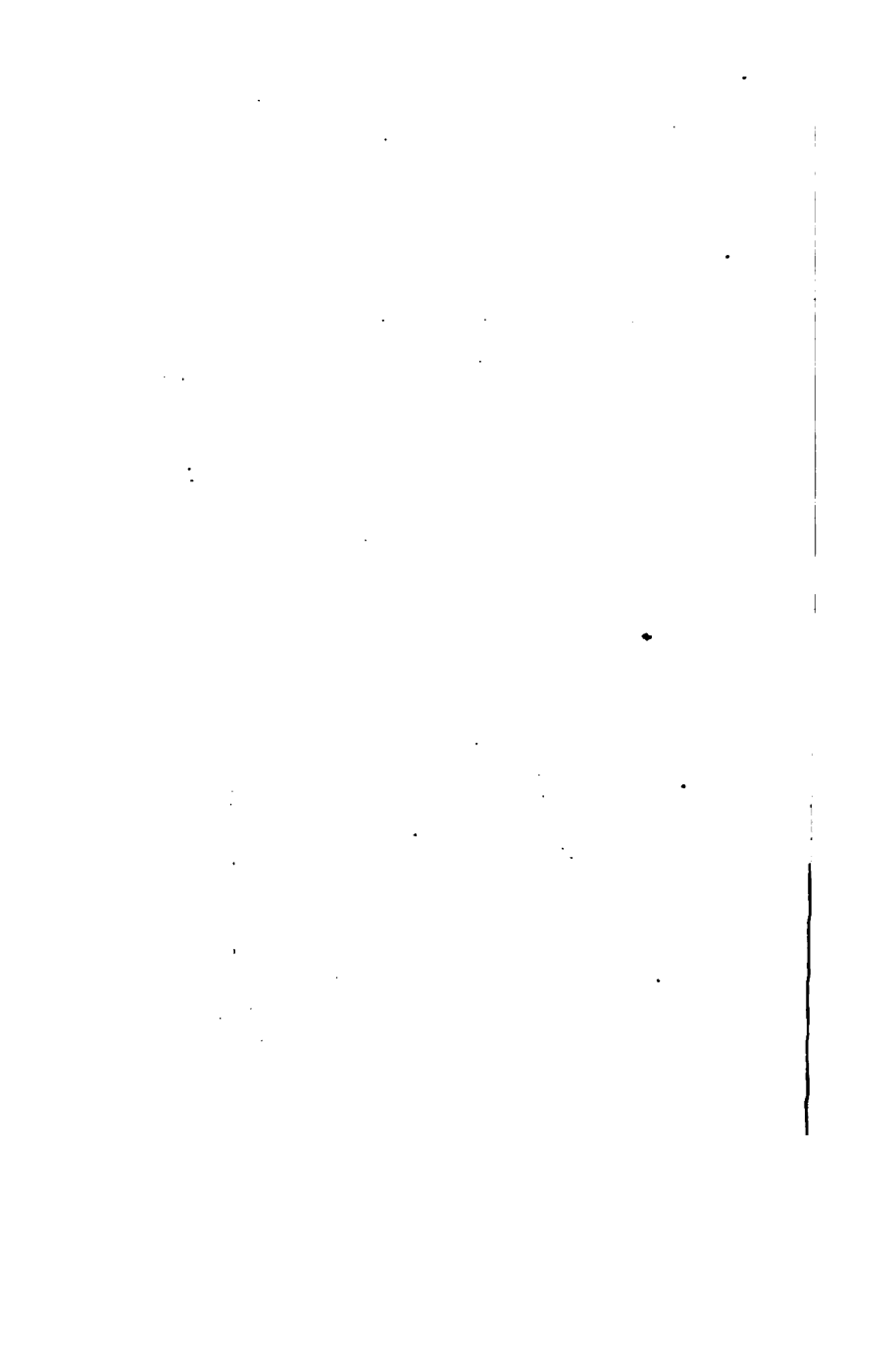
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was that both Greek and Latin physica:  
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placing of the sufferer on the Samaritan's own beast, conveying him to a khan, tending him there, and on the morrow pledging himself to stand good for all that the wounded man might cost the keeper of the inn. Eastern hospitality, in his case, at least, could not be over-coloured; he was a friend indeed, as depicted by the great Teacher.

But now comes the Saviour's application of the parable, Who was neighbour to the sufferer? The priest? He was as unfeeling as the robbers. The Levite, then? He also was heartless. Not these then, but the Samaritan, hated and despised as he was. He had a heart to feel, and a hand to help. The second great commandment was obeyed by him, and in obeying it, he distanced the other in that charity which is the bond of perfectness and the fulfilling of the law. He might, indeed, have found some excuse, as many do, for neglecting the Jew, but undeterred by all, he listened only to the voice of his own tender feelings, and is therefore a king among men, a type of such great ones as Howard, and Fry, and Florence Nightingale.

But the deep meaning of this parable becomes

more clear, when we call to mind the feelings of Jews towards Samaritans. A mere catalogue will suffice:—

A Samaritan, then, was deemed by a Jew a mere idolater who worshipped the image of a dove.

He was publicly cursed in the Jewish synagogues.

The Jews prayed that he might have no portion in the resurrection of life.

His testimony was in no case to be received.

The Jew who entertained a Samaritan was laying up judgments for his own children.

To eat a morsel of his fare was as bad as eating swine's flesh.

A pure Hebrew would endure any woe rather than be beholden to a Samaritan or Cuthite.

He desired never so much as to see one of that hated people. In short, the accumulated bigotry of corrupted Judaism was concentrated against the Samaritans. They were the objects of an intensified malignity. Nor were they in their turn behind the Jews in hating. When Jews fell into the hands of Samaritans,

they were sometimes barbarously murdered. On one occasion a Samaritan polluted the temple at Jerusalem by scattering human bones in it. In short, malignity, fierce, rancorous, and fiery, raged between the two peoples. Their everyday life was a war to the knife.

But see how Jesus tries to mitigate all this, by showing that hateful as a Samaritan might be, there were cases when he might surpass the proud Jew, or deserve to be better loved than he. He might heap coals of fire upon the heads of that hating people (Rom. xii. 20). At all events, that man who might have left his hereditary enemy to perish in his blood took so different a course that he has been a model ever since. He was truly a neighbour; love made him that, however national antipathies might hinder.

But more than this. Some—for example, Luther and Melancthon—suppose that the Saviour himself may have been the good Samaritan here meant to be described, and if so, how true the description! *He* bound up the broken heart. *He* poured the balm of consolation into the wounded soul. When man

was covered with wounds and bruises, and noisome sores, he mollified them with ointment; he soothed by loving. We know, moreover, how surely he could say, "I will repay." The whole burden of man's rescue from death was laid upon him, and he bore it all. Moved with compassion, he brought deliverance at a cost which after eighteen centuries has never been computed. Though rich, yet for our sakes he became poor; and though we cannot say (as some have said), that this is the meaning of the parable, we may say assuredly, that grand as is the sympathy, and deep as is the love of this Samaritan, it is as the small dust in the balance, mere echo to voice, mere shadow to the sun's light, compared with that love in the bosom of Jesus which many waters could not quench.

And so the Saviour tells that it is not country; it is not blood or name; it is not common interests, or hereditary ties that chiefly link man to man. It is pity to the suffering from those exposed to similar ills; it is sympathy on the part of those who before to-morrow's sun arise, may be as the half-dead man is now. That constituted a neighbour, and thus the

truth which Jesus teaches, were it learned, would link man to man all round the globe. Our poor distracted world would become one vast brotherhood; the gulf would be bridged over which separates nation from nation, tribe from tribe, and man from man. In brief, the wide-ranging truth taught by Jesus is this: every one that has need is our neighbour; the Samaritan not less than the Jew is to be loved, pitied, aided; and is not this precisely the religion which suits the race who are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward?

## The Prodigal Son.

LUKE XV. 11-32.

THIS has been called the pearl and crown of all the parables—so rich, and copious, and instructive is it, that some have even called it “a gospel within the gospel.” The ways of man and the way of God are both laid down here as on a map.

Yet different opinions are entertained as to the real meaning of this parable. According to some, the two sons represent the Jews and the Gentiles. According to others, the younger son represents all who return from their wanderings to God; while the elder is the representative of the self-righteous in every land and age. But without entering upon such discussions here, let us consider some of the topics which lie on the surface of the exquisite narrative. The youngest may thus prove wise, and the oldest become encouraged by the way.

And first, the younger son asks his share of his father's goods. He was weary, perhaps,

of the restraints of his father's house; he thought he would be happier anywhere than there, and he hurried away on the wings of hope to find some scene of unfettered enjoyment. "Not many days" thereafter, he set out. He was in haste to be free, though he was himself laying snares for his own soul, and away he would hurry to a distance from his home—embarking with all he had on a most tempestuous sea. Now, this is just the sinner weary of God and his holy restraints; the sinner eager to find full scope for indulgence, panting to be his own God—unlimited and unrestrained, or rather, calling the bondage of his passions freedom.

How, then, did he proceed? He wasted his substance in riotous living. He rushed from sin to sin, each bringing him nearer and nearer to ruin—each sinking him deeper and deeper in misery. That is what men call liberty; but it is the liberty of self-destruction—a succession to a heritage of woe.

The youth, however, was not to be utterly forsaken. Nay, when he was reduced to poverty a famine arose; he began to be in want, and has nothing to fill him but the

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His way was hedged up with thorns, and he



THE PRODIGAL SON.

fruits of his own devices—at least, if he had anything else, it was such food as the swine did eat. He had become a swine-herd, one of the most degraded of all menials in the eyes of a Jew; and yet, degraded as he was, no man sympathized with his sorrows, or gave him to eat. He had learned that the way of transgressors is hard; his sin had found him out. He is the slave of passion, and the servant of brutes.

But when was it otherwise? Who ever violated the laws of God without suffering? Alexander the Great could conquer a world, and make millions his slaves, but he could not conquer his own passions; nay, he died a drunkard's death, and so with uncounted thousands. Sin leads to misery, just as death leads to corruption and dust.

But the prodigal "came to himself." He was in a swoon, or he was deranged before, but his sorrows and his hardships roused him. The famine threatened death; he thought now of his father's house and the plenty that was there. Thither he would return; but it was with the language of contrition on his lip. His way was hedged up with thorns, and he

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must return. "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against thee. . . ." Oh, blessed hunger ! Oh, happy degradation, which has become the means of arresting the wanderer, and turning his thoughts homeward and heavenward ! How many of the sons of men, once the thoughtless dupes of sin and of their own hearts, will bless God for ever and ever for the sorrows which brought them to the Saviour's feet ! When the soul began to feel the pressure of famine, the true bread was sought.

Moreover, this humbled wanderer cannot lie low enough now. A father's love has touched his soul, and he is in the dust. "I am not worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants." Such was his feeling, and in cherishing it he became a type. It was the hand on the mouth, and the mouth in the dust, as becomes the humbled sinner. It was the cry of Job : "Behold I am vile . . . ." Nor did the erring man linger in carrying out his purpose. He arose, for in shame and misery he sat in the dust, and went to his father ; and at this point the beauty of the parable is perfect, both in itself and its

signification. See the father recognising the son "a great way off," as God does the sinner! See how he compassionates the abject wanderer! Mark how that father falls on his neck and lavishes on him all the endearment of affection—the warm embrace, the best robe, a ring for his hand, and shoes for his feet, and a fatted calf for a high festival,—all these awaited the long-lost son. It is all the father—his heart and soul given to the great work of loving.

And is not this a perfect picture of the welcome which awaits the sinner returning to his Father who is in heaven? No harsh repulsion, but weeping love; no stern upbraiding, but joyous welcome; no employing as an hireling, but full restoration to rank and privilege—freedom the largest, and happiness the purest. Sin is blotted out; and though that sinner can never, never forgive himself, he can rejoice in the blessedness of the man whose iniquity is covered. It is mercy triumphant. It is the moan of woe changed into a hymn of joy.

But there never was an Eden without its serpent; a sunrise without shadows. The

elder brother grudged that the wanderer should be so welcomed, and for a time that marred the general joy. Just as some are envious at the good, this brother resented his father's kindness. Untouched by brotherly affection and parental joy at the recovery of a long-lost child, he sullenly refused to mingle in the mirth.

Now is this the Jew grudging that the Gentiles should be admitted to the Holy One's favour, or is it some self-righteous Pharisee eighteen hundred years ago or more, offended because God is pleased to show mercy to the chief of sinners? The narrative partakes of the character of each of these; but let us leave them, and join the circle of joy. Let us see here an emblem of the sinner restored to the favour of his God—reclaimed from his wandering, wise after his folly, and found—nay, saved, after he had been lost. Look just at the general aspects of the parable, and see beyond all question our heavenly Father rejoicing over our return to himself. Here is spiritual life for the spiritually dead, and here is one of the finest exhibitions which even the New Testament contains of the love and the

grace of our God and Saviour. Let us return, and return again to our Father's home and heart. Rather, let us beware of ever wandering from our Father's guardianship. Being brought nigh,—not repelled by *our* Elder Brother, Jesus, the Son of God,—let us seek to keep nigh, and dwell in that peaceable habitation, the little sanctuary which God forms for his people.

## The Rich Man and Lazarus.

LUKE xvi. 19-31.

THERE is nothing more remarkable in the word of God than the mixture of grandeur and simplicity which is there. Take the most hoary-headed sage: he will find something too august for him to measure, too magnificent for him to grasp. Take a little child, and he will find the profoundest truths simple, the most comprehensive easy. There is nothing great, and nothing little to God. The universe is but *one thing* to him, and something of that appears in the Bible.

Here, for example, is a parable setting forth some of the most awful truths that ever solicited thought from man; and yet they are made so simple, and rendered so plain, that the child who can lisp his mother's name may both understand and enjoy the pictures.

The very words are pictorial. The purple, the fine linen, the daily sumptuous fare of the one, are significant in themselves, but became

doubly so in contrast with the beggar—a second Job—laid at the gate, the sores upon him, his hungering even for crumbs, and the dogs licking his ulcers. No greater contrast can be pictured: on the one side we have revelry, riot, and oblivion of God, selfishness ascendant, and pleasure the only divinity; on the other we see disease, wretchedness, and apparently approaching death.

But the great leveller is at hand; in one respect the rich man and Lazarus are alike—they die. The one was conducted to Abraham's bosom, a Hebrew phrase for blessedness; the other was just buried. He must away to the tomb after all his revelry. He might have some "sepulchral column" reared, but that did not retard the last enemy. "He was buried"—that summed up his earthly account.

Nor should we fail to notice what is often pointed out, that Jesus does not accuse this rich man of oppression; he did not crush the weak, or despitely use the dependant,—at least that is not said. He was just selfishly wrapt up in his own enjoyments. What shall I eat? what shall I drink? wherewithal shall I be clothed?—these were his engrossing cares,

and as he believed in nothing regarding the next world, he sank without restraint into the poor pleasures of this. He continued thus till his earthly career was run.

We say his earthly career. But what of him beyond the grave? Did the joy of Dives and the sorrow of Lazarus continue there? Nay, all was put right now. The rich man, not because he was rich, but because he had forgotten God amid his riches, and lived only for pleasure, was wretched; the poor sufferer, not because he was poor and suffering, but because he was a son of Abraham indeed, was blessed.

And how shall we measure the wretchedness now mentioned? A drop of water, one drop, would have been a relief—a respite from the burning consciousness of a life misspent—of sin heaped upon sin, of God forgotten, of pleasure made our chief good, and eternal joy eternally lost. But no relief could be granted. On earth man may change; he may flee from the wrath to come—but beyond the grave there is no change for ever; and as the rich man had chosen his good things in this world, he could not have them in the next. There

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are not two heavens—at least for guilty men—one here and one hereafter, and that delusion was dispelled when the rich man died. He was tormented, and a great gulf was placed between him and blessedness.

A great gulf—who can say how great? It is the gulf which separates a sinful soul from a holy one—a man who lives without God from a man who lives for God and in him. It is the gulf which parts a lost soul from a saved soul—a believer in Jesus from one that disregards him. It is the gulf, in short, which separates life from death—a wide gulf—an eternal one—and one that none but Jesus can bridge over. But that bridge must be constructed on this side the grave; there is no place for it beyond.

Now, this is one great lesson taught in this parable. There is an everlasting distinction between those who die in sin, and those who die in the Lord. No mortal power can break down that distinction or fill up the gulf. *Here* I must make my choice of life or death—of the blessing or the curse. *Here* I must take my place among the lost or the saved; among those who believe or those who believe



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not. On the other side of death there is no room for such decision ; the choice made here is eternal.

But while we recoil with a kind of shudder from the rich man's torments, who can declare the blessedness of Lazarus ? Is the long-lost seaman glad when he has reached his haven ? Is the weary exile glad when he has reached his home ? Is the hireling happy when his day is done ? But what are all these to the exceeding weight of glory—to sin all pardoned and all past, and Jesus seen as the eternal portion of the soul ? Surely it is true that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived, the joys which are in store for the saved of the Lord. Poverty *is* hard. Sores *are* vexing. Hunger *is* gnawing, and countless are the griefs of earth ; but the Spirit of God calls them “light afflictions”—and so shall we when we get home to glory—Abraham's bosom, the Hebrew's second Eden, will compensate for all.

But when the rich man could not escape from torment himself, he tried to prevent his brothers from rushing upon woe. They were living as he had lived, and might perish as he

had perished. But he would fain prevent that result, and idly wished a messenger from the dead to be sent to warn them of their peril.

Now, here the great Teacher shows that beyond the grave all men are believers. They make a mock of sin and of torment here ; but in the eternal world it is a dire reality—a curse, an everlasting death—men will for ever wail forth the dirge,—

“ I weep the more because I weep in vain.”

Again, those who were the means of helping others to sin on earth, deplore that madness when the other side of the grave is reached. Hence the cry of the man, once lapt in luxury but now in torments, for some messenger to go to his brothers. Oh, prevent this woe ! Arrest them amid their folly ! Tell them that perdition is a dread reality, however men may deny or disbelieve it ! The desire, however, was alike vain and foolish. It was vain, for no such messenger could be sent ; and it was foolish, for though one had gone from the dead, he could not have said more than Moses and the prophets had said already. It is not a spirit from beyond the grave—it is the Spirit

of God that turns men from their sins. It is not a phantom—it is the inspired word of God that must be the means of winning sinners away from death to life. They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them. If deaf to such instruction, what could a mere apparition do. When One did rise from the dead (Jesus the Son of God), how many, or how few believed on his name ?

The end of the whole matter is this : To live in pleasure here is the way to woe hereafter. To suffer here may be blessed as the means of preparing us for joy for ever. The word of God is man's sovereign guide to glory ; whatever is not there is delusive, feeble, and unavailing. The youngest may learn these things, and perhaps learn them best.

## The Pharisee and the Publican.

LUKE XVIII. 9-14.

THE traveller who climbs the Alps soon begins to notice how the beauties expand as he ascends. When one elevation is reached his feeling may be that the gorgeous scene which is outspread below cannot be surpassed, and he lingers on his way to gaze. But another height, another, and another, reveal still other beauties, until the mind of the traveller passes into the region where thoughts lie too deep for words.

It is even so in the study of the parables. One is exquisite, it can scarcely be surpassed ; but the next, and the next appear more lovely still, and hence the mind rejoices amid beauties which at once fascinate and instruct.—The next parable is one of singular point and power. Against no tendency in man was the Saviour's teaching more directed than our self-righteousness. While that rules in any mind the Lord Jesus must be rejected ; and to root it out, this parable was spoken. Two men



## CHAPTER IV

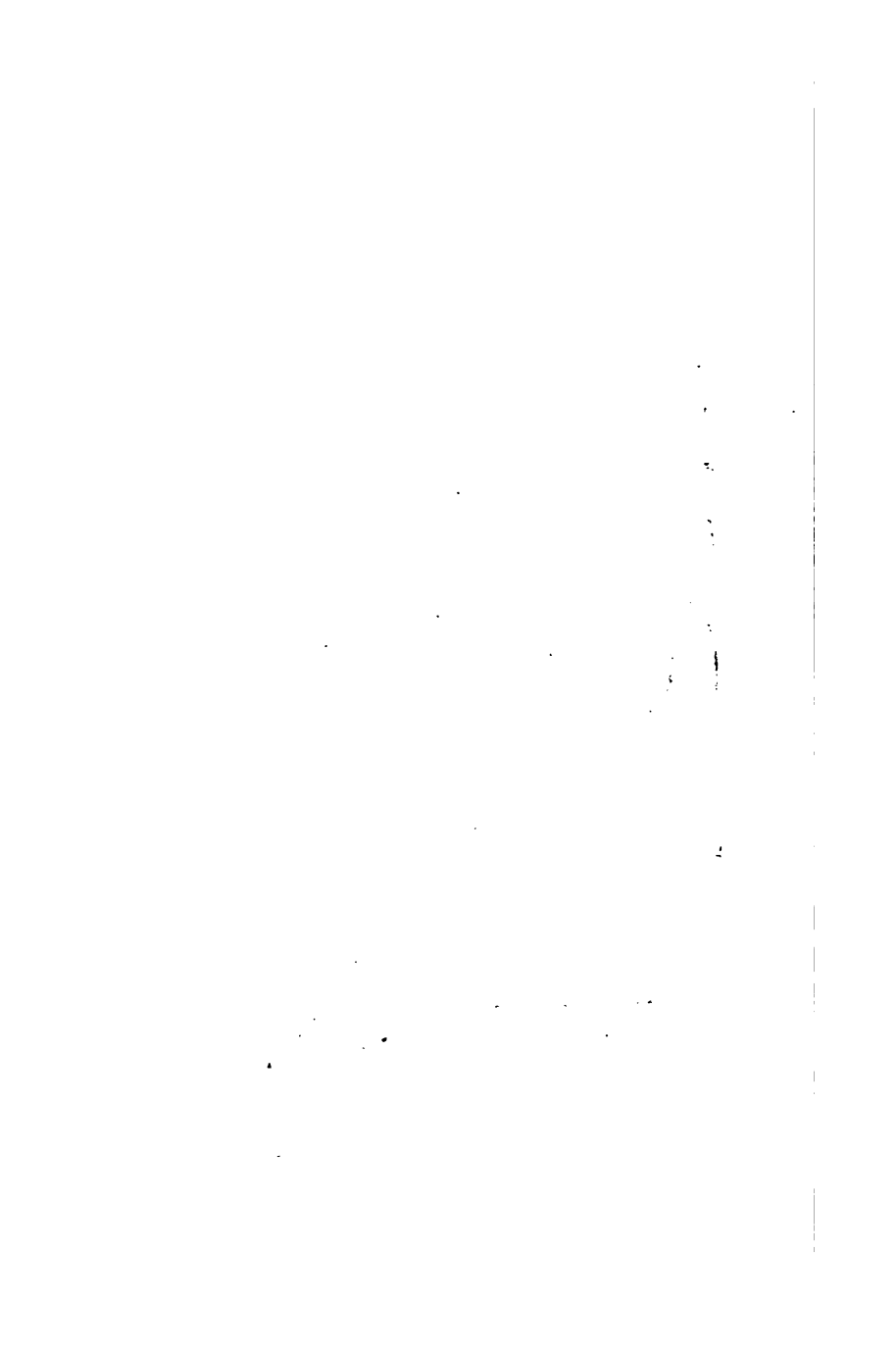
The travellers, however, did not notice how the Puelan people were different from the Vindians. They were not so tall, and their clothing may be described as being more simple and less ornate. It is surprising to find that the Puelians on the coast had adopted the European method of clothing, and were clothed in European attire, but they had not yet entered the region where the Puelians were still to be found.

It is even so in the case of the Puelians. One is exquisite in design, but the next is of a different style, and hence the next is of a different style, and hence the next is of a different style, which at once indicates the next parallel is one of the power. Against no other power. Saviour's teaching more direct, righteousness. While that rule was the Lord Jesus must be rejected and to the out, this parallel was spoken. Two



**THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.**

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went up to the Temple to pray, the one was a Pharisee,—a very proverb for self-righteousness,—the other was a publican—a very pariah, as much despised as the other was admired, or at least admired himself. In the temple the difference between them speedily appeared. The prayer of the Pharisee, here held up as a beacon to all, was a boast, not a supplication—the dictate of inflated pride, not of lowly humility. In comparison with other men he was pure, at least in his own eyes. Sin after sin was disowned by him. Twice a week did he fast. All that he possessed was tithed ; in short, there he stood before the holy God a proud boaster of his goodness,—not conscious of a single sin, at least not confessing one, ignorant entirely of the plague of his heart—a man who deserved heaven, who could climb to it by his own deeds, and seemed to need neither mercy nor pardon. He even dared to revile his fellow-men to his God, and made his prayer a mockery and a sin.

Now, this picture may be highly coloured, to bring vividly out the Pharisee's spirit ; but, in substance, the prayer is taken from real life. That worshipper did not know he was a sin-

ner, and there was therefore no abasement. He felt no need of mercy,—nay, he had done more than was required—two fasts for one, and tithes of all instead of only a part. The cobwebs of his own righteousness were deemed sufficient for a covering. In brief, he knew neither the holy God nor his law ; and oh, how many are like him—how many never felt, even for a moment, that they are sinners against God, and must either get the righteousness of another or perish !

But that Pharisee had a companion on the Temple floor—a publican—who was scarcely to be named in the same breath with a Pharisee. And that humbled man knew what worship was ; he knew God ; he knew himself ; and with downcast eye—for he was ashamed to look up—and contrite heart,—for he beat on his breast to show that the plague was there,—his cry was, “ God be merciful to me a sinner.” There was penitence in his heart, and therefore humility in his deportment ; and Jesus points to him as a model, as much as to the other for a warning beacon. The publican went down justified, for he cast himself upon mercy, while the Pharisee asked God’s favour

on the ground of right ; he was encased in self-righteousness, and his prayer was one sin more, or many sins in one. In his spirit our services are sins ; in that of the humbled penitent the cry is heard, the blessing is granted, and the darling grace of the Saviour—humility—clothes the soul in beauty. It is a maxim, “ he that would be great must begin by being little ; ” it is not less a maxim “ that God resisteth the proud,” and both are verified in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The great swelling words of the one, the lowliness of the other, render them exemplary for all time.

On a journey made about two hundred years ago, a man, whose fame then filled the world, was overtaken by his death’s disease. He had written not a little to explain the truth of God, and though not seldom far astray in his explanations, he was sometimes successful,—at least he was learned. When the hand of death was on him, a minister of religion was called, who dealt faithfully as he should have done with the dying man. On the one side his sins were set forth in outline, on the other the grace of God that bringeth salvation

was displayed ; and the whole was pressed home by an appeal to the case of the publican in this parable. "I am that publican," said the dying philosopher, statesman, and scholar,—"I am that publican," and he died. Now, it is when we thus take home the lessons of the word of God that we begin truly to profit : Lord, is it I to whom that warning is given—to whom that promise is made—in whom that grace is triumphing ? When the Bible is read in that spirit, we are not far from the kingdom of heaven, and when the young thus apply their hearts to the wisdom which is all divine, the path of pleasantness and peace will assuredly be trod by them.

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